

Community Studies *for* **Rural High Schools**



Prepared for use in
Rural High Schools in West Virginia
By **L. L. Friend**
State Supervisor of High Schools



Office of
The State Superintendent of Schools
Charleston

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INTRODUCTION

No course of instruction in the public schools is complete that does not give the learner a closer and more definite knowledge and understanding of his immediate environment. This is a truth that we have in the past largely overlooked in planning courses of study for our schools, particularly for our high schools. Languages and peoples that are dead and activities and institutions that are remote in time or distance are interesting and valuable and have a proper place in our high school programs; but their place should be a subordinate one. So strong, however, are the cords with which tradition has bound most of us that we have continued to act on the assumption that no education can be acceptable or in good repute that does not include a large share of these dead and remote things and that the study of "the life that now is" and the conditions and circumstances that immediately surround us cannot have a legitimate place in school instruction.

The result of this is that the high schools are turning out many boys and girls who know something of Latin and German, something of the civilization of Greece and Rome, and something of geometry, but who know little or nothing about the community in which they live; they know nothing of its history, nothing of its traditions, nothing of its industries, nothing of its institutions, and nothing of its possibilities for the future. The life that goes on about them, with its needs, its failures, and its suggestions, makes no appeal to them, because they do not understand its significance.

Our rural communities in West Virginia have greatly suffered in the past because the majority of their young people who have gone to high school and to college, have not returned to them to give them the benefit of their training and their increased ability. They have gone into the towns and cities of the state and into the towns and cities of other states, to seek opportunities there and to use there the ability that they have developed. Many

of them have gone to seek opportunities in distant places because the lessons they learned in school dealt largely with distant places and distant activities. They have yielded to the lure of things they have read about and thought about. They have discovered no opportunities at home because they have not been taught how to look for them.

Partly because of this desertion by many of their best young people, some of our rural communities are yet undeveloped, and many of those that have been developed owe their development to those who have come in from the outside.

The rural communities of West Virginia are yet rich in opportunities, however, for those who will seek them; and there is not a state in the union in which a faithful study of community conditions and community needs and possibilities will more satisfactorily repay those who will make it in the spirit of sympathy and affection that ought to characterize the native born investigator.

To the rural high schools, which have been springing up so rapidly in the state within the last few years, belongs the opportunity of revealing to the young people of their communities the immediate value and future promise of such study and investigation. Their pupils are mature enough to find interest in such studies and to draw from them intelligent conclusions.

The purpose of the studies here suggested, therefore, is to offer to the rural high schools of West Virginia a definite program for community study. It proposes no text-book study of rural economics; but throughout, the community itself must be the field of investigation. To obtain the information suggested the student must go here and there in the community; he must gather information from records and from men. He must collect data and work out statistics, and draw conclusions, with the aid of the teacher, from the information he has gathered. The work should arouse in him the enthusiasm that youth experiences when creating something or discovering something new.

It is not expected that every question asked can be answered fully in every community or that every investigation suggested can be carried to satisfactory completion, though most of them

should lead to definite answers and definite conclusions. Many of the questions are asked not so much for the sake of the answers themselves as for the thought that may be aroused while the answers are being sought. Many of them have stopped short of indicating the conclusions expected so that the student may not be unnecessarily prompted in his thinking.

The district is the unit of territory selected for these studies for the reason that the district is the unit of local school and civil administration and of high school organization for most of the rural high schools of the state. In the three county high schools each student may be required to make the study in the district in which he lives.



COMMUNITY STUDIES—THE DISTRICT

THE PEOPLE

What is the population of the district? Is the population increasing or decreasing? How many families have moved out of the district in the last five years? Find out, if possible, why they moved. Where did they go? How many boys and young unmarried men have left the district in the last five years? Find out, if possible, why they left. Where did they go?

How many families have moved into the district in the last five years? Where did they come from? In what work are they engaged? Do they rent or own property?

How many residents of the district desire to sell their property? Find out, if possible, why they want to sell.

How many men and women in the district are high school graduates? How many are college graduates? How many young people from the district are now in college?

What per cent of the inhabitants of the district are farmers? What per cent of the farmers own their farms?

How many farmers in the district take farm papers, newspapers and magazines? How many use the bulletins of the Department of Agriculture and the State Agricultural College? How many farmers in the district have attended one or more short courses at the State Agricultural College?

Are farmers' institutes held each year in the district? How well are they attended?

How many farmers in the district use up-to-date farm machinery and appliances? How many employ up-to-date methods in farming?

Is there a general tendency on the part of the residents of the district to improve their homes and make them more attractive and homelike? If many of the homes are neglected as to their appearance and comfort, what is likely to be the effect on the district?

What opportunities are there for social life among the young people of the community? Are these helpful in their character? How might opportunities for wholesome social life in the district be improved?

THE CHURCHES

How many churches are there in the district? By what denominations are they supported? How many churches own church houses? How many of these are fully paid for? How large is the membership of each? What is the total church membership in the district?

How many Sunday schools are maintained? What is the average attendance in each Sunday school? How many of the Sunday schools continue throughout the year and how many close through the winter months?

Are all of the churches conveniently located? Are they all adequately supported? Could any of them unite and thus receive better support and do more effective work?

What per cent of the population of the district over ten years of age belong to church? What has been the average attendance in all the churches of the district during the past year? Compare church membership and church attendance in the district with that of ten years ago. If a noticeable increase or decrease in the membership of the churches of the district has occurred, what are the probable causes?

Is there a strong spirit of rivalry among the churches of the district? If so, is the effect favorable or unfavorable? What special activities are carried on by any of the churches? How frequently are regular church services held? Are the churches and other church property kept in good repair?

THE SCHOOLS

How many one-room schools are there in the district? How many schools of two or more rooms?

What is the total enumeration of youth of school age in the district? What is the total enrollment the present year? How

many schools have an enrollment of fewer than twelve pupils? How many one-room schools have an enrollment of forty or more?

Are all the schools suitably located? Could any of them be consolidated? If so, how many, and at what points could consolidation be most advantageously effected? Would transportation of pupils be practicable anywhere in the district? If not, why? What are the advantages of consolidation and transportation? Get information concerning consolidation in West Virginia and other states.

How many teachers are employed in the district? How many of these reside in the district? How many have taught the same school more than one year? How many as much as five years? How many are graduates of high schools or normal schools? What salaries are paid teachers in the district? How do these compare with salaries in other sections of the state?

Is the compulsory attendance law enforced? How many prosecutions under this law last year? Is the child labor law enforced? What are the provisions of this law?

Are the school buildings kept in good repair? How many modern school buildings are there? Are the school grounds ample in size and are they attractive in appearance? Are the schools well furnished and well supplied with apparatus and equipment?

How many schools have libraries? What is the total number of volumes in the school libraries of the district? Are the books in these libraries properly cared for? Are any of the school libraries used by the people of the community outside of the school? Could arrangements be made for the use of the school libraries by all the people of the community?

How many pupils in the district pass the eighth grade examination each year? How many of these enter high school? How many pupils have graduated from the high school since it was established?

To what extent are the school houses of the district used as community centres? Is there room for a more extensive use of the schools for this purpose? What are the benefits of using the school buildings as community centres?

Are the elementary schools performing their work efficiently and

satisfactorily? What subjects, if any, are too much emphasized? What subjects, if any, are not sufficiently emphasized?

Are the schools supervised by a district superintendent? If so, what have been the results of district supervision? What are its possibilities?

What are the school levies of the district? What is the total valuation of taxable property (real estate, personal property and public utilities assessed by the State Board of Public Works)? What is the total annual expenditure for school purposes? Is the valuation of property increasing or decreasing? In either case, find out why. How much does the district receive from the State Distributable School Fund? What is the cost per capita of education in the district? How does this compare with other sections?

THE ROADS

Make a map of the district to be used throughout this study. On the map draw all the public roads in the district. Indicate the good roads and the bad roads. How many miles of public road in the district? Are additional roads needed? Indicate by dotted lines on your map roads that are needed, if any.

Could any of the present roads be conveniently changed so as to reduce grades, shorten distances or improve conditions?

What good road-building materials, if any, are there in the district? By consulting the county road engineer, estimate the probable cost per mile of improving the bad roads of the district.

Try to estimate the cost per ton per mile of hauling farm products to market over the bad roads of the district as they are now in winter. (Take into consideration the time required, the size of the load that can be hauled and the value of the services of the driver and team for the time required.) Try to estimate the reduction in cost of marketing produce if these roads were properly improved. (Obtain information on this question from bulletins published by the State College of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture.)

How much money is spent each year in the upkeep of the roads of the district under present conditions? Is the present system of

road repair in the district economical? If the roads were properly improved, what would probably be the annual cost of upkeep per mile?

What effect would the improvement of the roads probably have on agriculture in the district? What effect on land values? What effect on the public schools? What effect on church attendance and social life in the community?

Would it pay the district to vote a bond issue running from ten to twenty or thirty years for the improvement of its roads?

What are the present laws of West Virginia in regard to the building and maintenance of roads? Are these laws adequate?

STORES, MILLS, POST OFFICES, RAILROADS, BANKS, ETC.

How many stores are there in the district? Where are they located? Are they conveniently located? Is there any locality in the district that needs a store?

What is the present cost of common household necessities in the local stores? What are the prices paid for farm produce? Do the stores afford a satisfactory market for the surplus farm products of the district? What is a co-operative store?

How many "grist mills" are there in the district? Where are they located? Is there need for one or more additional mills? If so, what locations are suitable? What are the present demands upon the mills of the district? What kind of power is most economical for mills in the district?

How many blacksmith shops in the district? Is there need for others? If so, where? What should a blacksmith shop in the district be prepared to do?

On your map indicate the post offices and R. F. D. routes in the district. Is the mail service in the district adequate and satisfactory?

How many miles of railroad in the district? What was the average cost per mile of building the railroad constructed in the district? Is the freight and passenger service reasonably satisfac-

tory? How has the railroad aided in the development of the district?

What banks, if any, are there in the district? What are the capital stock, the surplus and the total deposits of each? Which are state and which are national banks? What are the differences between these? What interest do they pay on time deposits? If there are no banks in the district, where is most of the banking business of the district done?

Under what conditions may money be borrowed from the local banks? Under what conditions would it be advisable for a young man in your community to borrow money to buy a farm or to go into business? How many young men and women in the district have savings deposits in the banks?

How many physicians are there in the district? How many of these have come in from other sections? Is there need in the district for more physicians?

AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL POSSIBILITIES

How many farms are being operated in the district? How many acres in the largest farm? How many farms are there containing more than five hundred acres? What is the average size of the farms of the district? Has the average size of farms increased or decreased in the last ten years?

Have many small farms been bought up by large land owners? If so, is this helpful or injurious to the agricultural interests of the district? How many acres of land in the district are owned outright by lumber companies, coal companies, or other corporations? What use is being made of this land? Is such ownership of land beneficial or injurious to the district?

About how many acres of bottom or valley land in the district? How many acres of hill land that can be cultivated profitably? How many acres of hill land that cannot be cultivated? For what is this land valuable? How many acres of swamp land? How many acres of swamp land have been drained? How many acres of swamp land that can profitably be drained? How many acres

of timberland? About what is the total number of acres under cultivation in the district?

What is the character of the soil of the bottom land? Of the hill land? How much of the farm land of the district has been worn out by constant cropping? How much of this could with proper methods be restored to fertility?

What are the principal cereal and feed products of the district? If possible, find out the amount and value of each last year. Is the district producing enough of these to supply its own needs? If not, why? If it is producing more of these than it needs, is the surplus marketed profitably each year? If not, why? Could a larger surplus be produced profitably? If so, under what conditions?

How many horses, cattle, hogs, sheep and farm fowls were raised in the district last year? What was their value? Is the number of these in the district increasing, decreasing, or remaining practically stationary from year to year? If decreasing, what are the causes? Are conditions such as to warrant an increase in the number of any or all of these farm animals raised in the district?

To what extent is fruit-growing carried on in the district? Could it be profitably extended? Under what conditions?

To what extent is dairying carried on in the district? Are conditions suitable for the profitable extension of dairying? What are the conditions necessary to render it profitable?

Make the same study as above with reference to market gardening.

What sections of the district are best adapted to wheat, corn, oats, hay, cattle, sheep, dairying, market gardening, apples, peaches, small fruits?

What farm implements and machines that are not now used could be used profitably in the district? What machines and appliances could be used economically in the farm homes of the district to lighten the work of farmers' wives and daughters?

OTHER RESOURCES OF THE DISTRICT

In what sections of the district, if any, and in what quantities is coal found? Iron ore? Brick clay? Building stone? Glass

sand? Builders' sand? Gravel beds? Marketable timber? Other resources? To what extent are these being developed? To what extent have they been bought up but not developed? What are the possibilities of their profitable development in the future?

What streams are there in the district that could be utilized for power purposes? Find out what you can about the utilization of streams for power purposes elsewhere in this state and in other states. Find out what you can about the advantages of water power. Have the power rights of any of the streams of your district been acquired by corporations? If so, what was paid for them? What is the present state law relating to the control of water power privileges and water power companies? Is this law adequate?

A SPECIAL STUDY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN COAL MINING REGIONS

When was the mining of coal on a commercial scale begun in the district?

How many seams of coal are being worked in the district? What is the name of each? What is the thickness of each?

For what uses is the coal of each seam specially adapted? Find out why each has special uses.

Find out the average cost per ton of mining the coal of each seam. Compare this with the cost of mining other seams of coal in the state.

If coke is manufactured in the district how many ovens are in operation. What are the uses of coke?

What is the total capital invested in the mining of coal and the manufacture of coke in the district? What proportion of the capital invested is from this state and what proportion from other states? Where is the outside capital from?

What is the total annual output of the mines of the district? What is its value? Where are the coal and coke produced in the district marketed?

How many miners and coke-workers are employed in the district? What per cent of them are Americans and what per cent foreigners? Which make the best miners? What per cent are "floating" and what per cent fairly permanent?

Are the miners of the district comfortably housed? Do they take care of their houses and attempt to keep them attractive?

What does the average miner in the district earn per day? What is the average daily wage of outside mine workers and coke workers in the district?

In what mines are electrical mining machines and other modern mining appliances used? Find out as much as you can about these. If possible get permission to see some of them operate.

Find out all you can about the causes of mine explosions and other mine accidents and get information about the safety appliances used and precautions taken to prevent mine accidents. How many deaths due to mine accidents in the district last year? How many men were seriously injured? Get copies of the Workmen's Compensation Act of West Virginia and ascertain how it applies to miners.

Find out by inquiry what opportunities there are for high school graduates to obtain positions of various kinds with the mining companies in the district? Ascertain what qualifications are necessary to start.

If possible find out about how much money is spent each year by miners of the district for vegetables, native fruits, poultry, etc. How much of this is shipped in from city commission houses, and how much is supplied by local growers. Would this market justify market-gardening, fruit-growing and poultry-raising on a larger scale in the district? Make a careful study of this question.

What favorable effects has the development of mining had upon the district? What injurious effects? May the injurious effects be wholly or in part overcome? If so, how?

How much has the taxable valuation of property in the district increased since mining began?

SPECIAL STUDY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN OIL AND GAS REGIONS

When were oil and gas first discovered in the district? How many producing oil wells and gas wells in the district at the present time? How many have been exhausted?

What are the names and relative positions of the different sands

in which oil and gas are found in the district? What is the average depth of each sand? In what sand are the largest oil wells found? In what sand the largest gas wells? What was the initial production of the largest oil well ever drilled in the district? The largest gas well? What is the average cost of drilling a well in the district? What is the average life of oil wells and gas wells in the district?

What oil and gas companies are operating in the district? What is the present price of petroleum? The usual price of gas? What was the total value of oil and gas produced in the district last year?

Where is the oil produced in the district refined? How is it transported to the refineries? What is done with the gas produced in the district? If possible visit an oil pumping station and a gas pumping station and find out what you can about them. What are the principal biproducts of petroleum?

Are there carbon black factories in the district? If so, find out all you can about the manufacture of carbon black and its uses.

How many men are employed in the production of oil and gas in the district? What is the usual compensation of the various classes of employees in oil and gas production?

Compare the quality and value of the oil produced in your district with that produced in Texas and Oklahoma.

How long will the oil and gas probably last in your district?

In what ways has the discovery and development of oil and gas been helpful to the district? Which of these benefits are likely to be permanent? What injurious results are noticeable? Are any of these likely to be permanent? What has been the effect on the roads? What has been the effect on agriculture?

How much has the valuation of property in the district increased since the development of oil and gas began? Is it continuing to increase or is it beginning to decline?

Find out all you can about gas and oil leases, the land owners' share in production, etc.

SPECIAL STUDY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN TIMBER REGIONS

How many acres of timber land yet remain in the district? Find out the total number of feet of lumber cut in the district last year. How long at this rate will the timber in the district probably last? What is the capacity of the largest saw mill in the district?

What other industries are there in the district that use timber? What kinds of timber do these use and in what quantities annually?

What kinds of timber are found most abundantly in the district? What are the principal uses of the various kinds? Get information about the different grades of lumber. What is the present market price of various grades and kinds of lumber?

Find out if possible, how many acres of marketable timber have been destroyed by forest fires in the district. Estimate the loss thus sustained. To what extent might this loss have been prevented? How may such loss be prevented or reduced in the future?

How much of the district is now covered with a growth of young timber that will, if protected, develop later into marketable timber? Would the reforestation of certain sections of the district by planting be practicable or profitable? Has reforestation by planting been attempted anywhere in West Virginia? If so, where? If possible find out something about reforestation in Germany, Denmark and other European countries. If reforestation by planting is practicable in the district, what kinds of trees should be planted?

In many of our timber sections large tracts of land are owned by lumber companies and other corporations. Frequently this land when cut over is for sale at very reasonable prices. If there is such land in your district, what prices are asked for it? On what terms of payment may it be obtained? What parts of it are suitable for farming? For fruit growing? For cattle and sheep raising? What would be the probable cost of clearing this land?

LOCAL HISTORY

Were there Indians in the territory now composing the district in which you live? If so, what tribe or tribes? When did they leave the region? Why did they leave? Where did they go? What Indian relics are to be found in the district?

Who were the first settlers in the territory that now composes the district? Where and when did they settle? Where did they come from? Did they own land? If so, how did they obtain it? Consult early deeds and records at the county seat. Find out all you can about the early settlers from old inhabitants. Are there any descendants of the first settlers now living in the district?

Locate the oldest house in the district. When and by whom was it built? Find out all you can about the furniture and equipment of early houses in the district, about the size of the early families, family life and social life.

When and where was the first church in the district established? By what denomination was it established? How often were services held? When and where were other early churches established? Get information about early church gatherings in the district, and about the influence of these early churches. If possible obtain information concerning pastors of the early churches.

Where and when was the first school established in the district? How many pupils attended it? What subjects were taught in it? Obtain information about other early schools in the district and about early school furniture and equipment and early school books. For what purposes other than school purposes were the early school houses used? If possible obtain information concerning early school masters in the district.

When and where was the first store in the district established? By whom was it established? What was then the nearest shipping point? What prices were then charged for provisions and household necessities? What prices were received for farm produce?

When and where was the first "grist mill" erected in the district? By whom was it erected? Find out what you can about the

kind of equipment used in this mill, about its capacity and the charge of the miller for grinding.

When and where was the first blacksmith shop in the district established? By whom established? Find out what implements and tools were then made by the blacksmiths.

Were there other industries in the district such as iron furnaces, salt furnaces, &c? If so, when and why were they discontinued?

Find out what you can about carpet weaving, wool carding, spinning, cloth weaving, tin smithing and gun smithing in the district in early days.

Who was the first justice of the peace in the district? Were his services often required? What in the main was the nature of these services?

What residents and former residents of the district have served in the State Legislature? What residents and former residents have held county or state offices?

If possible, a district museum should be established in the high school, in which should be brought together Indian relics, primitive furniture, household utensils, farm implements, old guns, traps, records, books and other things connected with early life in the district.

The telling of interesting stories relating to pioneer life can be made an interesting feature of the local history study.

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